

Region 8



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EPI-WATCH

The Epidemiology Newsletter for Region 8

Region 8: Benton-Franklin Health District, Klickitat County Health Department, Walla Walla County Health Department, Yakima Health District

Welcome to the premiere issue of "EPI-Watch". Our goal is to provide epidemiological news and information impacting public health in the local health jurisdictions comprising Public Health Emergency Preparedness Region 8. For further information and for requests on obtaining this newsletter, comments, and article submission, please contact:

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Meet our regional Epidemiology staff!
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Hot Topics in Communicable Disease

Early arrival of Flu season

This fall has seen increased reporting of influenza throughout the region and Washington State, as well as a nation-wide increase. As of the end of November, 2003, there have been 145 laboratory identified cases of influenza type A in Washington State, including cases reported in Benton, Klickitat, and Yakima counties. Age range of surveillance cases is 1 month to 95 years with most cases occurring in the under 30-age group. However, we have seen an increase in older patients in

nursing home/assisted living situations with influenza-like illnesses, including nursing homes in Benton and Yakima Counties.

With the early arrival and increased levels of influenza, there has been an increased demand for the flu vaccine. This year, 83 million doses were produced nationally. (Historically, there have never been more than 80 million doses used in this country in any given year.) In Washington State, availability of vaccine varies from community to community. Contact your local health jurisdiction for more information.

Flu Vaccine Update

Because of high demand for influenza vaccine and dwindling supplies, Washington State Department of Health would like to encourage health care providers in Washington to prioritize remaining doses of inactivated influenza vaccine for use among children and adults who are at highest risk for complications related to influenza, as described by Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Groups recommended by ACIP to receive inactivated influenza vaccine include:

- persons aged 50 years and older
- residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities for those with chronic medical conditions
- women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season
- adults and children with chronic pulmonary or cardiovascular disease, including asthma
- adults and children who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus [HIV])
- children and adolescents aged 6 months to 18 years who receive long-term aspirin therapy
- healthy children aged 6 to 23 months
- persons who can transmit influenza to those at high risk including: health care personnel in both hospital and outpatient-care settings, medical emergency response workers (e.g., paramedics and emergency medical technicians) AND household contacts (including children) of persons in groups at high risk (high risk groups include children < 24 months old)

See ACIP recommendations at: http://www.cdc.gov/nip/flu/acip03-04_recs.htm

Please note - for children, vaccine should be prioritized to give a first dose to children 6 months to 18 years of age with underlying medical conditions, and not used to provide a second dose of vaccine to a healthy child, if feasible.

For healthy individuals 5-49 years of age, who are not in contact with persons at-risk, live attenuated influenza vaccine (FluMist) is an option. See http://www.cdc.gov/nip/flu/acip03-04_recs.htm#flumist for details about FluMist.

Increase in Incidence of Tick-Borne Relapsing Fever

Tick Borne Relapsing Fever increased throughout the region during the summer and fall months of 2003. Typically, there are 2 to 12 cases of relapsing fever, or Borreliosis, reported annually in Washington State. The agent causing relapsing fever is a spirochete from *Borrelia* spp. Clinical signs and symptoms include intermittent fevers lasting 2 to 9 days alternating with afebrile periods of 2 to 4 days. The incubation period is typically 8 days (range 5 to 15 days). Untreated, the case-fatality rate is 2%-10%.

Diagnosis by laboratory criteria involves demonstration of parasites on blood smears or a special blood culture. The reservoir is typically wild rodents and transmission is via the bite of *Ornithodoros* soft ticks that usually live and feed off rodents. Treatment for relapsing fever is tetracycline. Control measures include rodent and tick control of dwellings, particularly cabins or other domiciles that go uninhabited for long periods.

Important Notifiable Condition Reporting Phone Numbers and Local Health Jurisdiction Contact information for Region 8

To report a notifiable condition in:

Benton & Franklin Counties:

Benton-Franklin Health District
(509) 547-9737

Walla Walla County:

Walla Walla County Health Department
(509) 527-3290

Klickitat County:

Klickitat County Health Department
(509) 493-1558

Yakima County:

Yakima Health District
(509) 249-6541

Online Resources

Benton-Franklin Health District:

<http://www.bfhd.wa.gov/base/index.php>

BFHD Communicable Disease Statistics:

<http://www.bfhd.wa.gov/bio/epi.php>

Klickitat County Health District:

<http://www.klickitatcounty.org/health/>

Walla Walla County Health District:

<http://www.co.walla-walla.wa.us/Departments/health/health.htm>

Yakima Health District:

<http://www.co.yakima.wa.us/health/default.html>

Washington State Department of Health:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/>

WSDOH Notifiable Conditions:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/Notify/list.htm>